

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00

INRE-00 ACDE-00 /026 W

-----076231 101919Z /53

R 101851Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6971

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USDEL MBFR VIENNA

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION NATO

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 23286

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E.O.11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PARM FR US UR

SUBJ: DE GUIRINGAUD ON ARMS CONTROL AND STRATEGIC
MATTERS

REF: (A) PARIS 23165; (B) NATO 7585

1. SUMMARY: IN THE COURSE OF AUGUST 8 WORKING LUNCH
WITH AMBASSADOR AND POL COUNSELOR (REF A), GUIRINGAUD
AND LABOULAYE REITERATED STANDARD BUT STRONG FRENCH
CONCERNS ON ARMS CONTROL AND STRATEGIC ISSUES,
PARTICULARLY CTB AND MBFR. GUIRINGAUD INDICATED FRENCH
STRONG INTEREST IN DETAILED BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH
US AFTER BARRE RAISES AT TOP LEVEL THESE ISSUES DURING
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HIS WASHINGTON VISIT. END SUMMARY.

2. GUIRINGAUD ANALYZED FRENCH STRATEGIC CONCEPTIONS IN
FAIRLY STANDARD TERMS. AS THE ONLY "SECOND-TIER"
COUNTRY NOT TIED TO NATO (UK AND FRG) OR LAGGING
TECHNOLOGICALLY FAR BEHIND (CHINA), FRANCE IS IN UNIQUE
POSITION OF HAVING "INDEPENDENT, MODERN AND CREDIBLE"

DEFENSE. WHILE UNEQUIVOCALLY WITH THE WEST, FRANCE IS DETERMINED TO RETAIN ITS INDEPENDENT CAPACITY. THE FRENCH POSTURE IS ADVANTAGEOUS FOR WESTERN DEFENSE BECAUSE OF ADDITIONAL ELEMENT OF UNCERTAINTY IT INTRODUCES INTO THE SOVIET STRATEGIC CALCULATION. THE US GOVERNMENT HAS RECOGNIZED THIS. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, FRANCE'S STARTING POSITION ON ARMS CONTROL MUST BE THAT THE US AND THE USSR SHOULD REDUCE THEIR ARMAMENTS LEVELS FIRST. ONLY THEN SHOULD THE SMALLER POWERS REDUCE THEIR OWN.

3. IN FRANCE, GUIRINGAUD SAID, INTEREST IN DISARMAMENT HAS BEEN DORMANT FOR FIFTEEN YEARS AND IS NOW ONLY PERKING UP AS A RESULT OF THE DEBATE WITHIN THE LEFT ON FRENCH DEFENSE POLICY. HOWEVER GOF IS NOW WORKING ON ARMS CONTROL MATTERS INTENSIVELY AND PLANS TO MEKE A MAJOR PRESENTATION AT THE UN SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT IN MAY 1978. THE FRENCH WILL GIVE SOME "PRELIMINARY INDICATIONS" IN A UNGA SPEECH DURING THE REGULAR SESSION THIS FALL. BETWEEN NOW AND THEN THERE WILL ALSO BE MAJOR PUBLIC INFORMATION EFFORT TO EXPLAIN THINGS TO FRENCH OPINION.

4. FOR THE PRESENT, FRANCE IS DISTURBED THAT THE US DOES NOT ALWAYS TAKE FULL ACCOUNT OF "WESTERN EUROPEAN" INTERESTS, CITING PARTICULARLY CTB AND MBFR.
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5. ON CTB, THE FRENCH ARE CONCERNED BECAUSE THEY NEED MORE TIME BEFORE ACCEPTING A COMPLETE TEST BAN. AMBASSADOR HARTMAN REMARKED THAT THE AGREEMENT PROVIDES FOR CONSIDERABLE TIME. DE LABOULAYE CONFIRMED THIS BUT SAID THAT EVEN FIVE YEARS WOULD NOT BE ENOUGH. DE GUIRINGAUD THEN SAID THAT PERHAPS THE US COULD HELP BY SUPPLYING FRANCE WITH CERTAIN INFORMATION. HE DID NOT ELABORATE.

6. DE GUIRINGAUD THEN DWELT AT LENGTH ON MBFR INSISTING THAT FRANCE IS BOTH PUZZLED AND CONCERNED ABOUT WHY THE US IS SO POSITIVE ON MBFR. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT WE WANT TO SEE WHETHER THE SOVIETS ARE PREPARED TO ACCEPT A CEILING IN CENTRAL EUROPE. DE LABOULAYE RESPONDED THAT THE FACT THAT WE ARE PURSUING SALT MAKES A CONVENTIONAL BALANCE IN NATO EVEN MORE IMPORTANT. YET, AS THE FRENCH SEE IT, A "SUCCESS" ON MBFR WOULD RESULT IN FREEZING THE SITUATION ON A BASIS UNFAVORABLE TO THE WEST. DE GUIRINGAUD THEN PARTICULARLY STRESSED THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ELEMENT -- THE

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R 101851Z AUG 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6972
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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USDEL MBFR VIENNA
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RISK OF DEMOBILIZING GERMAN OPINION. WHILE SCHMIDT
FAVORS MBFR BECAUSE HE HOPES TO REDUCE SOVIET MILITARY
PRESENCE IN EAST GERMANY, GENSCHER IS STRONGLY OPPOSED
FOR THE SAME REASONS AS THE FRENCH.

7. GUIRINGAUD TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT WE WOULD RECEIVE
A REPLY REGARDING OUR PROPOSED ANSWER TO THE SOVIETS
(PARIS 22026) ON CCD. HOWEVER FRENCH PROBLEMS ARE NOT
SIMPLY WITH THE CHAIRMANSHIP, BUT GO TO THE SUBSTANCE
OF CCD ACTIVITIES, WHICH, MOREOVER, CANNOT BE LOOKED AT
IN ISOLATION. IN PARTICULAR, THE FRENCH WOULD NEED
CONSIDERABLE REASSURANCE ABOUT THE US APPROACH ON MBFR.

8. THROUGHOUT CONVERSATION GUIRINGAUD AND LABOULAYE
RELATED FRENCH CONCERNS ON MBFR TO ISSUE OF LINGERING
DOUBTS ABOUT US STRATEGIC RELIABILITY IN GENERAL. IF
SOVIETS TOOK HAMBURG IN "PRE-EMPTIVE
MOVE" AND THEN STOPPED, HE ASKED COULD EUROPEANS REALLY
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BE CONFIDENT OF AN ALL-OUT US COUNTER-ATTACK? RECALLING INADEQUATE FRENCH RESPONSE TO THE REMILITARIZATION OF THE RHINELAND IN 1936 GUIRINGAUD THEN SAID THAT HISTORY STILL HAUNTS EUROPE. INDEED, FRENCH DID NOT NEED EVANS AND NOVAK TO TELL THEM THAT US MUST BE TAKING A HARD LOOK AT THE MILITARY POSITION IN THE FRG.

9. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT FRENCH ABSENCE FROM THE NPG WAS UNFORTUNATE SINCE MANY OF THE THINGS THAT BOTHER THE FRENCH ARE EXPLORED IN DEPTH THERE. GUIRINGAUD SAID FRENCH NPG MEMBERSHIP WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION, BUT INDICATED STRONG INTEREST IN A DETAILED US/FRENCH DIALOGUE ON ALL THESE ISSUES AFTER BARRE HAD RAISED THE PROBLEM DURING HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON.

10. WE ARE REPORTING A BRIEF RELATED EXCHANGE ON THE NEUTRON BOMB ISSUE BY SEPTTEL.
HARTMAN

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